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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000913

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/2017
TAGS: [IS](#) [LE](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: UNIFIL COMMANDER WARNS ISRAEL WILL
RETALIATE IF ATTACKED AGAIN FROM LEBANON

Classified By: DCM William Grant. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

SUMMARY

1. (C) UNIFIL Force Commander Graziano, calling the June 17 rocket attack against Israel a "severe violation" of UNSCR 1701, credited excellent UNIFIL communication with the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and Israeli restraint for Israel's decision not to retaliate. However, he warned that Israeli was likely to retaliate in the event of a future, expected attack, and urged UNSC members to support UNIFIL's efforts to contain Tel Aviv. Both Lebanese and Israeli defense forces blamed foreign groups (and not Hizballah) for the attacks. Graziano also reported on recent progress in demarcating the Blue Line and reaching agreement on security arrangements for Ghajar. End summary.

2. (C) UNIFIL Force Commander General Claudio Graziano briefed ambassadors from UN Security Council member-states on June 20 on recent developments in UNIFIL's area of operations, including the June 17 rocket attack against Israel and progress on the Tripartite process to demarcate the Blue Line. DCM, accompanied by Pol/Econ Chief, represented the Embassy; other countries represented included the UK, France, Russia, China and Belgium. Graziano was accompanied by Senior Advisor Milos Strugar and other members of his staff.

ROCKET ATTACKS: NEXT TIME, ISRAEL WILL RETALIATE

3. (C) Graziano began his briefing with an outline of events surrounding the June 17 firing of three katyusha rockets (107 mm with a range of up to nine kilometers) from El Aadeissa (south Lebanon) into Israel, calling it a "severe violation" of UNSCR 1701 aimed at undermining the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and UNIFIL. Only two of the rockets reached their target, causing damage but no casualties; a third rocket misfired and was not found. Upon reaching the launch site, UNIFIL and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) found a fourth, unlaunched rocket along with a timing device. Graziano said reports of the Israelis firing five shells in response to the attacks were "totally false."

4. (C) The Israelis, thanks largely to UNIFIL's on-going and immediate intervention following the attacks (Graziano said UNIFIL has effectively assumed the role of hotline between the LAF and IDF), agreed not to retaliate. Israel's restraint was also the result of PM Siniora's quick

condemnation of the attacks and Israel's belief that Palestinian extremists similar to the ones the LAF is actively battling in Nahr al-Barid are responsible. Eisenkot reportedly blamed Asbat al Ansar (based in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp in Sidon) for the attacks, claiming he had information the group was planning another attack in the near future, a view Graziano found credible since a single attack "was not logical." Graziano warned the UNSC representatives that Israel would not hold back the next time an attack occurred. Urging them to support UNIFIL's efforts to contain Tel Aviv, Graziano stressed that Israeli retaliation in response to a future attack "would be disastrous." Graziano said Hizballah denied any responsibility and he noted it was unlikely the group was involved.

15. (C) In a June 18 meeting with UNIFIL, LAF leaders also said foreign (Palestinian and/or Syrian) groups probably were involved in the attacks, which they believed were carried out by the PFLP-GC. The LAF believed the purpose was to open a second front (after Nahr al-Barid) in Lebanon and to destabilize the situation in the south. ID checks on the more than 100 people arrested by the LAF in connection with the attacks suggested that about 50 percent of the perpetrators were non-Lebanese, coming from countries like Syria, Yemen, and Sudan. The LAF will continue to be on high alert and will increase its ground presence in the area. Graziano stressed in particular to need to control the crossing points over the Litani River to prevent rocket-making materials from entering the border zone and to launch coordinated search operations for weapons and ammunition in specific areas. LAF Commander General Sleiman and General Matar agreed to conduct such missions in close

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coordination with UNIFIL.

GHAJAR: CONTINUED STALEMATE ON SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

16. (C) Graziano reported progress in the Tripartite talks held in Naqoura on demarcating the Blue Line. On Israeli withdrawal from Ghajar, Graziano said that while both the IDF and LAF remained committed to finding a compromise, the LAF was still demanding a fixed timeframe while the IDF continued to insist that the withdrawal date remain open-ended until a permanent solution is found. UNIFIL soon will propose an amended text proposing that the security arrangements for Ghajar be put under a two-year UNIFIL mandate.
FELTMAN